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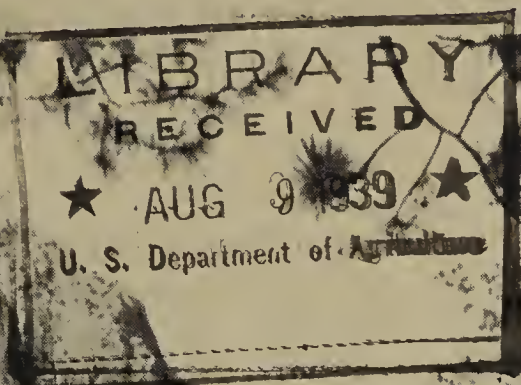
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Charleston Mountain

A DIVISION OF THE

Nevada National Forest

NEVADA



Cathedral Rock in Kyle Canyon

F-11268

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

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Charleston Mountain

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FOREWORD

THE Charleston Mountains of southern Nevada have long been of keen interest to foresters, botanists, geologists, and other scientists. Since November 5, 1906, when President Theodore Roosevelt gave it national forest status, this attractive area has been under Forest Service administration.

Headquarters of the supervisor of the Nevada National Forest, of which the Charleston Mountain area is a division, are at Ely. A forest ranger is in direct charge of the division. He may be reached at the Post Office Building at Las Vegas during the winter season and at the Kyle Canyon ranger station in summer.

Completion of Boulder Dam and the growth in southern Nevada's population that has followed have brought a mounting demand for the forest's products and increased the importance of the Charleston Mountains for recreational purposes. The singular attractions and advantages of this area to the people of southern Nevada and to the growing number of visitors are briefly described in this booklet. By word and pictures it shows the interesting combination of forests, the unusual geology, botany, and climate, use by the people, and management by the Forest Service.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOREST SERVICE, F. A. SILCOX, *Chief*

Intermountain Region

Ogden, Utah

1939



F-295808

Deer Creek camp, where the only permanent living stream in the Charleston Mountains flows for 2 miles before it sinks into subterranean reservoirs.

An Oasis in the Desert

WITH Las Vegas as the hub, southern Nevada is rapidly growing into a unique, year-long playground. The mild winter climate and the large variety of attractions, in which Lake Mead and Boulder Dam lead the way, need only a mountain playground to perfect the design. The Charleston Mountain Forest does this in an unusual and surprising way.

Kyle and Lee Canyons, the two most easily accessible beauty spots, are only 35 and 50 miles, respectively, from Las Vegas and may be reached by excellent State highways. The mountain range beyond the heads of these canyons lies like a sleeping giant in the midst of the Nevada Desert. It is an oasis, where Nature makes a rare gift of plant and animal life, the beauties of summer and winter, and the striking freshness and coolness of the mountain air.

The visitor may go from the subtropical climate of Moapa Valley and Lake Mead, within an hour or a little more, to higher altitudes and extensive pine forests. Beyond the end of the road, scenic bridle trails from Lee and Kyle Canyons lead to the high summit of Charleston Peak, 11,910 feet above sea level. On the way and all about scores of attractions greet the visitor, and developments by the Forest Service provide for their complete enjoyment.

GEOLOGIC INTEREST

The geology of this region offers the visitor endless opportunities for exploration. For several seasons the mountain range has been studied by geologists and many unusual discoveries have been made. Of interest to the layman are the crinoids and fossilized shells and also concretions of great beauty which may be found on the high ridges of the Charleston Range. Evidence shows that this was once the floor of a deep ocean and these remnants are perfectly preserved in the dense limestone.

Lower in elevation throughout most of the area are the conglomerate formations. Beneath this conglomerate are protrusions of a colorful red and white sandstone bed. Intermingled with these, in the vicinity of Red Rock, are giant petrified trees, lying where they rested after being washed to the shore line of some prehistoric sea.

NO FLOWING STREAMS

Deer Creek, for a distance of about 2 miles, is the only permanent stream in the mountain range. All other creek beds are dry except for a brief period in the spring during the heavy run-off from melting snows. The many springs rising from the mountain sides flow but short distances and disappear into the porous formations.

Although the water from rains and snow disappears, it is by no means lost because, according to geologists, the Charleston Mountain Range is the source of all the artesian water that supplies Las Vegas, Kingston, and Pahrump Valleys. The artesian basins are fed constantly through deep, subterranean watercourses, and the mountains are, in effect, a filtration and storage plant working constantly and mysteriously in accord with natural laws so that the distant desert settlements may bloom and prosper.

A BOTANICAL LABORATORY

Surrounded on all sides for countless hundreds of years by the burning deserts, this mountain has been isolated from intercommunication with all other areas where similar plant and animal life occurred. Being subjected to greater extremes of temperature and other factors in development, the plant life has changed somewhat from its form when this isolation began. Charleston Mountain is therefore a veritable garden for the botanist.

Scientists for the Smithsonian Institution, the Los Angeles Museum, and the California Institute of Technology have over several seasons made collections of more than 400 plant species. Among these are several new species and species which may prove to be endemisms in botany. An area of surprises awaits the botanist, and annually many famous men make the trek to this mountain to view and study the distinctive flora.

Between the ponderosa pine belt and timberline is found one of the largest pure stands of foxtail or bristlecone pine (*Pinus aristata*) in the United States. Many trees reach a diameter of 6 to 7 feet. In some areas the characteristic gnarled and twisted trees picture graphically the eternal and bitter struggle with the elements. Along the ridges where air currents prevail in one direction, these trees assume a form of about 3 feet across at right angles to the wind and about 20 to 30 feet high. They are the ghosts of the sky line, bent and battle-scarred from constant struggles with winter blizzards and searing summer blasts.

At the low elevations surrounding the mountain grows the true desert flora in its many variations, and during the early spring months adds charm and beauty to the enchanting arid landscape.



The timbered headwalls of Kyle Canyon with Cathedral Rock low on the right and Charleston Peak rising on the left.



Ghosts of the sky-line ridges—foxtail pines, bent and battle-scarred from constant struggles with winter blizzards and searing summer blasts from Death Valley.



Eagle Gate in Kyle Canyon where the Joshua tree and sword cactus of the Nevada Desert meet the pine, fir, and juniper of the mountain forest.

CHARLESTON MTN. DIVISION

NEVADA NATIONAL FOREST

NEVADA

SCALE 1 0 1 2 3 MILES

12 MI. TO
INDIAN SPRINGS

SPR.

50 MI. TO LAS VEGAS

TO TONOPAH



CHARLESTON MTN. DIVISION

NEV 5

NEV 6

NEV 91

LAS VEGAS

NEV 5

NEV 5

NEV 268

BOULDER DAM

TO LOS ANGELES

TO SALT LAKE CITY

CLARK CAN.

TO PAHRUMP

McWILLIAMS
CAMP GROUND

CHILDREN'S
CAMP

DEER CR.
CAMP GROUNDS

DEER CR.
FOREST PLAY GROUND

WALLACE CAN.

11910

CHARLESTON PK.

CHARLESTON MTN.
LODGE

TRAILER

CAMP

LEE SPR.

KYLE
CANYON CAMP

FLETCHER
VIEW CAMP

KYLE
CANYON R.S.

CATHEDRAL ROCK

TRAIL

NEV 39

30 MI. TO LAS VEGAS

LEGEND

- NATIONAL FOREST BOUNDARY
- == MAIN MOTOR HIGHWAY
- == POOR MOTOR HIGHWAY
- - - TRAIL
- TELEPHONE LINE
- △ TRIANGULATION STATION
- ▲ RANGER STATION (REPORT FIRES HERE)
- ▲ CAMP GROUND
- ⊙ WINTER SPORTS
- ⊙ SUMMER HOMES
- LODGE

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

Zoologically the Charleston Mountains are widely separated from other similar areas except as to desert species of mountain sheep, antelope, and predatory animals which migrate across the broad, waterless valleys. Mule deer and mountain sheep are natives and so are the cat, lynx, coyote, gray and swift fox, badger, porcupine, and various smaller animals.

Antelope, and sage and blue grouse, which became extinct in the past, are being reintroduced. A herd of elk was planted in 1935 and is doing well. Wild turkeys are soon to be introduced. In a few years, under protection and careful management, Charleston Mountain should again become a hunter's paradise. Its adaptability as a game haven finds loud praise among sportsmen, and studies by the State game department, the Biological Survey, and the Forest Service are producing valuable data for development of scientific management plans.

The mountains abound in bird life during the summer and when migrations of the smaller birds take place in spring and fall. Many feathered travelers of the airways find in this region a welcome resting place where food and water are to be had in the midst of vast arid expanses.

LEGENDS OF THE INDIANS

In the years before white men came the nomadic Indians, who camped intermittently in the desert lands at the base of the range, regarded with awe the snow-capped loftiness of Charleston Peak. Because of the severity of the lightning storms along the high ridges and the frequent fires that followed in dry seasons, the god of fire was thought to dwell among the numerous hidden caves near the summits.

Legend has it that the perpetual wind whistling over the long north-south ridge was a warning to any who dared to trespass into the mountain solitudes. Those who disregarded the warning and ventured too far were forced off the west side and lost in the wild and intricate walls and formations of Carpenter and Wallace Canyons.

During prehistoric times, Indians cut hieroglyphics and petroglyphs into the rocks at the base of this mountain range. The stories have not been deciphered, but the writings are among the oldest of their kind in the United States.

In the heavy belt of single-leaf piñon which entirely surrounds this range, the Indian has harvested the nuts from which he derived a large part of his food. The annual nut-gathering pilgrimages of the old days have shrunk, however. Where once entire tribes came,



Scenic bridle trails from Kyle and Lee Canyons lead to the high summit of Charleston Peak.



F-295801

A restful spot in Kyle Canyon campgrounds—a popular retreat from the desert sun.

camped, and collected nuts, now a few Indians seek the tasty pine seed as a delicacy only.

RECREATION IN SUMMER

Kyle Canyon has long been a summer refuge and retreat of the desert people. A mile above Las Vegas in altitude, its shaded pine forests are constantly cool. The Charleston Mountain resort, with its comfortable cabins and a lodge, offers many attractions to the visitor.

Along the canyon bottom and on the upper benches the Forest Service has developed good campgrounds. At Kyle Canyon camp, Fletcher View, and the trailer camp



McWilliams children's camp in Lee Canyon where the youngsters play in the delightfully cool shade of giant pines.



Deep powder snow comes in December and January.

the accommodations are generous and complete. The campgrounds are equipped with running water, tables, fireplaces or stoves, and sanitation. In addition to the simple elements of comfort are Nature's great luxuries of cool air, inviting shade, and inspiring surroundings, all to be enjoyed leisurely by the visitor, without undesirable interference or restriction.

Little folks are not forgotten, and in the cool shade of the cathedral pines, children's playgrounds are provided. The children's camp in Lee Canyon has comfortable buildings and spacious playgrounds. Hundreds of Nevada boys and girls come here for a week or two to play in the heart of a primeval forest, to discover

its nature and study its mysteries, to breathe the pungent, invigorating mountain air, and be refreshed and strengthened.

In Deer Creek three camping spots of generous size are now ready. Farther on in Lee Canyon, a newly created recreation spot, the McWilliams campground, is ready to greet the outdoor vacationist with its water and simple improvements in a gorgeous setting of giant yellow-barked pines and stately firs.

WINTER PLAYGROUNDS

Winter sports are now a well-established activity and the region has become a year-long playground. The slopes of Kyle and Lee Canyons are deeply covered with snow from December to May. The smooth, varying slopes and the open pine forests present an unusual combination of winter features. The deep, white blanket completely covers the low undergrowth, and is broken only by the clean boles of the large trees. The ski runner must have some skill and dexterity to travel these forest routes.

Practice slopes, ski runs, and jumping hills are now developed in Kyle and Lee Canyons. Roads are kept open winter-long, and lodge accommodations in Kyle Canyon are always available. The children's camp in Lee Canyon is always open as a refuge for travelers who come to explore the almost endless winter trails.

TIMBER TYPES AND USE

Although ponderosa pine is the important timber tree on the intermediate mountain slopes, many other species appear in considerable quantities. Foxtail pine extends from the middle slopes to the uppermost limits of tree growth. Mixed with the pine are alpine fir, spruce, and aspen. In the lower altitudes below the pine type are the forests of piñon, juniper, and mahogany. The beginning of the desert is marked by the Joshua trees.

The timber on Charleston Mountain has an important place in the economic pattern of the surrounding country, a vast territory that needs a supply of fuel, posts, poles, rough lumber, and mining timbers. Although in timber operations all scenic and recreational values are carefully guarded, the outlying timbered areas are available for the use of Nevada people on ranches, in outlying communities, and for mining development. All logging operations are carefully handled.

PROSPECTING AND MINING

Prospectors have been active in the Potosi Mountain territory for many years, indicating that a mineralized zone exists in the Charleston Mountain Range. Many



Ski trails mark the winter route to summer homes in the Charleston Mountain resort in Kyle Canyon.

mining locations have been staked, and mining activities may eventually be much extended.

COME AND ENJOY IT!

The manifold resources of the Charleston Mountain Forest are being developed, used, and managed to give the utmost to the people of Nevada and visitors from everywhere. Timber, wildlife, scenery, minerals, recreation in winter and summer, all form a composite of natural wealth that under national forest administration will be maintained in perpetuity.

Come and enjoy the beauties of the forest, the freshness and coolness of the mountain air, the rest and quiet of the camps, and the diversion of the playgrounds. Visit this desert oasis summer or winter.

Observe the few simple rules that are necessary and help the forest ranger preserve the creations of nature so that all those who come after you may also see and enjoy them. Remember that a forest will burn when dry and follow the suggestions of breaking your match in two, putting out your cigars, cigarettes, and pipe heels, and never leaving a campfire before completely extinguishing it.

